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"THE TRUTH ABOUT GERMAN EXPANSION."

BY ANGLO-AMERICAN.

BARON VON STERNBURG has made himself widely known as one of the ablest and most assiduous Ambassadors in the German service. Thanks to his tact and social adaptability and the many bonds of sympathetic interest that unite him to President Roosevelt in a personal camaraderie, the German Embassy to-day commands an influence and prestige at Washington such as even the British Embassy in Lord Pauncefote's day hardly surpassed. In five years Baron von Sternburg has succeeded in dissipating the cloud of distrust and animosity that settled over German-American relations after the Spanish war. He has been the means of establishing between the Kaiser and the President an intimacy as close and cordial as any that subsists between any two rulers to-day. His adroitness and popularity have secured for his countrymen some valuable commercial concessions. On more than one occasion, but especially during the Algeciras Conference, he has powerfully influenced American policy in Germany's interests. Whenever American opinion has seemed to him an asset worth cultivating, he has skilfully cultivated it. No Ambassador has been more prolific of interviews, statements and articles dexterously designed to impress American sentiment.

The latest, and, in my judgment, quite the boldest, of his Excellency's efforts to philo-Germanize the United States took the form of an article that appeared in the March number of this Review under the title "The Truth About German Expansion." It was written to convince Americans that neither Holland nor Belgium nor Denmark nor the German-speaking part of Austria-Hungary has anything whatever to fear from the expansion of the German Empire, and that the United States may therefore dismiss all anxiety lest Curaçoa or Dutch Guiana or the Danish

West Indies should one day pass under the German sceptre. The German Empire, so runs the argument, has been proved by the history of the past seven-and-thirty years to be an Empire of peace, and her subjects have no other desire than to mind their own business. Those who maintain that the economic pressure of a rapidly increasing population must eventually force Germany to expand in spite of herself are wholly wrong. Germany needs no colonies; she is quite content with the open door. It is to her "a matter of complete indifference" whether the Lower Rhine belongs to her or to Holland or to Belgium so long as the traffic on its waters remains, as at present, free from all duties or restrictions. So far, indeed, is Germany from desiring to annex the small states on her northwestern border that she does not even wish to enter with them into a union of economic interests. Such a union would subject German industries to the unrestricted competition of Belgian coal and iron and German agriculture to the free importation of Dutch cattle. Nor are there any political considerations that might make annexation desirable. The Netherlands have lost their old strategic importance and are never again likely to be the arena of a great European conflict. freedom and independence are no menace to Germany; she is sure of their neutrality in the event of war and that is all she requires. Again, the German Constitution is a far more complex and delicately adjusted instrument than most foreigners realize, and the enormous difficulty of incorporating new states into its framework is in itself a powerful obstacle to any scheme of annexation. Moreover, Baron von Sternburg believes that "the importance of the mental element in politics is habitually underestimated," and he is persuaded that the psychological community between Germany and the Netherlands and Belgium, and the recollection of their intimate and helpful association in the past, will not only, "in the absence of every legitimate reason, prevent these nations from imputing to each other enmity and ill-will, but will promote instead an eminently sane, mutual cordiality." The fear of annexation, he concludes with idiomatic raciness, is neither more nor less than a bugaboo.

Why, then, does the bugaboo persist? If everything is as stable and simple as Baron von Sternburg asserts, how account for the indisputable uneasiness with which the Belgians and the Dutch contemplate their future? His Excellency accounts for

it quite easily. It is the handiwork of "political calumniators" in France and Great Britain. "A certain group of foreign political writers" has done it all. The point is recurred to and emphasized again and again. "I certainly do not believe that the fairy-tales of annexation originate in Belgium or Holland. Their sources are to be found elsewhere." If any of Germany's neighbors are apprehensive of her power or policy, it can only be because "some chauvinistic papers of Western Europe" have conspired "to undermine Germany's reputation." The fear of annexation "certainly does not emanate from Belgium or Holland, but from some place where persons, unacquainted with Germany and the Netherlands, blindly believe that the big German Empire simply must be possessed of an ambition to annex its two smaller neighbors." Baron von Sternburg admits the possibility that after the Franco-Prussian war and the unification of the German states, "some Hollanders and Belgians" may have been perturbed. But their anxieties, he thinks, soon crumbled away. "To-day the home of such apprehensions is neither Belgium nor Holland. Several years ago a group of writers, inspired by influential politicians of some Powers of Western Europe, started a virulent campaign for a Holland-Belgium Alliance, indicated to be the only means of saving these states from threatened annexation by the German Emperor. It is possible that such politicians promulgated these views in good faith, and believed themselves to be acting in the interests of their own countries, by holding up the German bugaboo to all the small states and frightening them into seeking the protection of their own altruistic and less dangerous friendship. At all events, the best refutation of the needlessness of this dread of annexation is the fact that the German bugaboo is not 'made in Holland or Belgium,' but is a strictly imported article."

In these passages the service which Ambassadors are popularly supposed to be sent abroad to render their country is fulfilled, as it seems to me, with an almost paralyzing completeness. I can only explain their inclusion in Baron von Sternburg's article by supposing that for the moment he forgot that the circulation of The North American Review was not confined to the United States.

I think myself that he overestimated American credulity when he imagined it would swallow the remarkable assertion

that the fear of German expansion in Holland and Belgium was the work of foreign journalists. But the thing was clearly worth trying. If Baron von Sternburg had been able to report home that he had hypnotized the Americans into believing that "political calumniators" in France and England were the sole source of strife or mistrust between an unaggressive Germany and the smaller states resting in her shadow in confidence and security, the Kaiser and Prince von Bülow, besides appreciating the full exquisiteness of the jest, could hardly have failed to form an even higher opinion of the jester. But success in such an enterprise could only be attained on impossible conditions of secrecy and selection. His Excellency's one chance lay in breathing his revelation into American ears alone. should have bought up the entire March issue of this REVIEW; he should personally have seen to it that it was distributed only in suitable quarters; above all, he should at any cost have prevented a single copy from reaching Europe, where the facts were known. With these precautions omitted the sequel was inevitable. When the cables flashed a précis of his article a smile began to creep across the face of Europe. When the full text could be studied in all its perfection, the smile broadened into an outburst of laughter and amazement at the sheer audacity of so huge a gamble upon American gullibility.

For the truth is, of course, that the apprehensions of the smaller states that border on the German Empire have their root partly in overt acts of German policy, partly in the contingencies that are likely to be provoked by any great European struggle, but chiefly in the writings and speeches of the Germans themselves. Baron von Sternburg holds forth as though he had never heard of the Pan-Germans, as though Professor von Halle had never written a line, as though Lamprecht, Lexis, Reismann-Grone, von Waltershausen, Anton and innumerable other propagandists were either Englishmen or non-existent, as though the Pan-Dutch League were fiction, and as though the project of bringing Holland and her colonies within the sphere of German control had not been from the first one of the leading items on the Pan-German programme. The Pan-Germans, it may be said, are not Germany. I am aware of that, just as I am aware of the coincidences that so often bring it about that Pan-German policies, officially repudiated at the outset, are officially adopted in

the sequel. All Germans are Pan-Germans at heart. All cherish the sentiment that the ethnographic boundary of the German race may some day be the political boundary of the German Empire. It is a magnificent, a natural and, to my mind, a thoroughly laudable aspiration, one of those great ideals that keep the soul of a nation alive and hearten and amplify its temper with an element of poetic fervor. But between Pan - Germanism as a dream and Pan-Germanism as a policy the gulf The responsible statesmen of Germany, "Real - Politiker," regard the propaganda of the Pan - Germans alternately as a folly, as a nuisance and as a convenient pioneer. They cannot approve a policy which, being advocated without reference to the concrete circumstances of the day, is at once nebulous and irritating. They cannot, on the other hand, wholly disavow a policy which sows the seed of a wider nationality, deepens and intensifies German patriotism and corresponds with the secret instincts of the people. That, however, is not the point. Baron von Sternburg has definitely asserted that the anxieties entertained in Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Austria-Hungary are the product of "some chauvinistic papers of Western Europe." I challenge that assertion. For every paragraph in this connection that his Excellency is able to produce from a French or English journal I will undertake to produce a hundred from the papers of his own countrymen. For every "Western European" article written for the purpose of arousing the fears of Germany's neighbors, I will show him a German book, and for every "Western European" book a German library.

The best statement of what may be called the Pan-German case against Holland—to confine ourselves for the moment to that country alone—is to be found in Professor von Halle's pamphlet, "Volks-und-Seewirthschaft," published in 1902. Professor von Halle is no obscure Pan-German scribbler; I am not sure that he even calls himself a Pan-German at all. He is one of the ablest of the younger professors in Germany and threw himself heartily into the Emperor's campaign for a larger fleet. Unlike Baron von Sternburg, but not unlike almost all German publicists with whom I have discussed the subject, the professor is very far from thinking that the Dutch control of the Lower Rhine is "a matter of complete indifference" to Germany. He regards it, and I have every sympathy with him, as a "monstrosity"

that the mouth of the Rhine, the German Tiber, should be in the hands of strangers. He believes it to be the cause of Germany's failure thus far to acquire that degree of naval strength and prestige which would secure respect for her wishes on the ocean. Canals have been built and preferential railway rates granted to divert traffic from Rotterdam. A small and weak people astride of Germany's busiest river is as vexatious an anomaly as though the mouth of the Mississippi were still in Spanish hands. Seeing that Holland is becoming increasingly dependent on her German neighbor, and "continues, as she has done for centuries, to draw her sustenance from the products of German labor," that she "participates in the advantages of German progress, but will not share its burdens," the professor finds it exceedingly objectionable that "a small coast people should be in a position to influence the traffic on the Lower Rhine and to take measures opposed to the interest of the Hinterland and to prevent the adoption of improvements, such as the deepening of the river and its connection with Antwerp." Passing from economic and commercial to political considerations, Professor von Halle discovers the necessity of union to be yet more clearly indicated. German Empire must be able to erect its line of defence in a favorable position and to protect it. So long as Holland is at liberty to close the Rhine valley and obstruct traffic with Belgium, she must continue to be a thorn in Germany's side. Holland which is weak either on land or at sea is a constant danger for the most important industrial districts of Germany. Consequently, the question is how to revise the international treaties between the two countries, both from an economic and a military standpoint, in a manner more in accordance with the actual condition of affairs, and so bring Holland and Germany closer together. A naval convention and a customs and commercial union must be concluded between them." Above all, the professor warns Holland that without a military understanding with Germany it will be impossible to protect the Dutch possessions in the East and West Indies from the aggressiveness and "ruthless seizures" of Great Britain and the United States. Java and Curaçoa can only be saved from the fate that has overtaken the Philippines and Porto Rico by being brought under the protection of the German fleet. At the same time it is unquestionably Germany's interest to take timely measures for protecting her growing trade with the Dutch East Indies from the danger of being hindered or restricted with which she is now faced in the Philippines." In fact, when it is so obviously to the larger advantage of both countries to take counsel together, "lest Holland's fate be that of Spain," why, asks the professor, most persuasively, should a petty narrowness stand in the way? The union he contemplates would preserve to Holland her complete independence, but it would prevent her from pursuing that merely dynastic and particularist policy which in the long run is bound to be as harmful to herself as to her neighbor.

A whole literature has grown up in Germany during the past decade to foster arguments, threats and appeals such as these. The Dutch are plainly told that Germany must advance to her "natural" confines and that, while Holland remains detached, Germany is in the intolerable position of a man who is denied a key to his own front door. They are reminded that the more Germany develops her canal and railway system, the more the Dutch ports will lose their trade. They are warned that in time of war Germany could not be expected to regard the Dutch ports as neutral. The colonial peril is repeatedly insisted upon, and always with reference to the predatory ambitions of England and America. The ethnological, linguistic and spiritual affinity of the two peoples is emphasized with an almost tearful tenderness. The commercial dependence of Holland upon Germany is convincingly driven home, and the advantages of an economic union are dwelt upon with alluring iteration. Holland, it is argued, does not need Free Trade as a general policy. So long as she has Free Trade with Germany her permanent interests would be amply safeguarded and enhanced. Even supposing that a Zollverein would lead to an immediate increase in the price of food, Holland would be more than compensated by free access to the vast German market, by the abolition of the veterinary restrictions on the importation of live-stock into Germany, by the relief given to unemployment, by co-operation between the two Powers in the development of colonial communications, and by the institution of common systems of coinage, patent laws, fiscal policy, railway tariffs, harbor and river dredging and postal arrangements. Germany, on the other hand, would gain by an increased commerce with the Dutch colonies, by practically possessing the mouth of the Rhine, and extending her North Sea

frontier, and by the stimulus that would assuredly be given to German shipping.

Such is a bare summary of the arguments with which the Germans have striven to win over the Dutch to the idea of economic amalgamation. And many of them are of unquestionable force and have, indeed, already borne tangible fruit. A beginning, that is to say, has been made towards effecting a postal union, and the German and Dutch Governments have co-operated in laying a joint cable to the Dutch West-Indian colonies. There are Dutch papers, too, that favor both a customs union and a military alliance with Germany, and the whole subject is one that is never far from the forefront of popular discussion. But the masses of the people remain resolute against any scheme that threatens to compromise their independence. They are not willing to give up Free Trade; they foresee that an economic union foreshadows an ultimate political subserviency to Germany; they intensely dislike the German militarist and bureaucratic spirit; they are far more conscious of the points of character, speech and manners that differentiate, than of those that tend to unite, the two peoples; and they cling with a hardy pride to the memories of the greatness of their past. But their position as a weak Power adjoining one of the most virile and aspiring nations in the world must always remain precarious; the tendency of events is towards an economic, if not a political, convergence; and a fiscal union of the two countries is, in my judgment, something more than a probability of the future. It will not, I think, come by force. I absolutely acquit Germany of any intention to impose her wishes upon Holland by conquest. The present Kaiser's policy towards his neighbors and kinsmen has been uniformly correct, and I see no reason why it should not remain so. whether as the result of some great political upheaval, or in obedience to the pressure which Germany is both able and skilful to apply, or from a change of fiscal opinion in Holland itself and a clearer realization of the advantages of economic union, I think it, not perhaps inevitable, but exceedingly likely that eventually the commercial, naval and colonial policies of the two kingdoms will be regulated in common.

I have, however, somewhat digressed from my point, which was merely to prove the hollowness of Baron von Sternburg's assertion that Dutch apprehensions are artificially stimulated from

abroad instead of being the natural reflex of German speeches. writings and deeds. And what, in this respect, holds good for Holland holds equally good for Denmark, Belgium and Austria-Hungary and to a lesser degree for Scandinavia and Switzerland. In all these countries the Pan-German idea is at work. In Scandinavia it takes the form of popularizing the notion of cultural, linguistic and ethnological kinship—not perhaps without an eve to a future German-Swedish alliance. In Denmark, where it encounters a formidable obstacle in the resentment aroused by the Germanizing policy in Schleswig, it is associated with the enormous importance of Denmark's benevolent neutrality in time of war. Denmark holds the keys of the Baltic and possesses also in the island of St. Thomas an invaluable naval base in the Caribbean. On both grounds she is an object of interest not only to the Pan-Germans, but to all Germany. Belgium the propaganda is mainly directed towards emphasizing the community of race and tongue between the Low Germans and the Flemish peoples and towards fostering the anti-French spirit in the Flemish renaissance. In Switzerland also, which the Pan-Germans magnificently describe as "a German province," the appeal is rather to sentiment and to racial and literary affiliations than to hard political fact, though the project of a customs union is always in the air and may conceivably take visible shape. Austria, on the other hand, where the German population numbers some ten millions, Pan-Germanism aims at nothing less than the absorption of the German-speaking districts of the realm of the Hapsburgs into that of the Hohenzollerns. I am not concerned to discuss the practicability of these grandiose schemes. But I wish to emphasize the fact once more that whatever trepidation they may cause is due, not as Baron von Sternburg wishes Americans to believe, to "political calumniators" in Western Europe, but to the activities of the Germans themselves.

It is not difficult to account for the disquietude of the smaller northern Powers that lie round the feet of the German Colossus. They see, to begin with, that Germany to-day commands a position for which dictatorship is scarcely too strong a word. Not since Napoleon has any ruler been in control of the actual and potential power that the Kaiser at this moment holds in his grasp. He is the head of the greatest and most scientific army in Europe, and perhaps in the world. His navy, though out-

numbered by two other fleets, and though lacking the stimulus of maritime traditions, is an instrument of admirable potency, fashioned with the meticulous carefulness that thirty-seven years ago made Germany invincible on land. The state organization at his disposal is beyond comparison the most efficient and most intelligent in Europe. Nor is it only in administrative perfection and material resources that the Kaiser is strong. He is strong, too, in the character and qualities of the people over whom he rules, a virile, supremely capable nation, thrilled with the consciousness of being on the crest of the rising wave, and looking forward to the future with an almost defiant assurance of success. They are the Romans of the modern world. There is hardly a field in which, given a fair chance, they have not vanquished all competitors. Hardy, patient, exact and remorselessly persistent, their triumphs have been equally signal in science, in commerce, in diplomacy and in war. With all the qualities of success, they have succeeded; but not, they feel, to the full measure of their deserts. The accident of time has thwarted their development. They arrived late upon the scene of Weltpolitik. While they were forging the indispensable weapon of unity, their rivals were laying the foundations of vast empires overseas. When they had at last welded themselves into a self-conscious state, they discovered that the question of whether they could ever become a world-power in the old, easy way had already been decided against them. They have striven to found a transmarine empire, but the result of their endeavors is not satisfactory. They find themselves more and more driven back upon Europe and Asia Minor for outlets of expansion. They are at present an imprisoned empire, cut off from the full freedom of the Baltic and the North Sea, from the Mediterranean and from the Adriatic. The short and difficult coast line between Holland and Denmark forms virtually the sole effective channel for the commerce of this powerful and ambitious nation.

And the nations that in this way cramp Germany's development are in all cases weaker than herself. She is walled off by puny, insignificant states from everything she most vitally needs for the protection of her security and the full utilization of her strength. Ports, territory, opportunities, lie just beyond her boundaries—boundaries, remember, that are artificial, not permanent, drawn by diplomatists, not by nature—and their oc-

cupation would provide for generations an adequate outlet for her surplus population, her maritime ambitions and her industrial enterprise. Apart, therefore, from the real or fancied claims of race, the temptation is a severe one. Nor is it made any easier to resist by the gradual change of Germany from a mainly agricultural to a mainly industrial state, by the rapid growth of her population, and by the increasing social pressure. Germany, reflect the small nations, wants room already; in a few years she may need it. The German Empire is the creation of the three interdependent processes of diplomacy, war and spoliation. Is there any reason for thinking that those processes are exhausted and that the era of German expansion is definitely closed? The plain compulsion of the facts necessarily keeps all the smaller kingdoms in a state of nervous apprehension. They are, it is true, protected by many international agreements of old standing, but they have lost faith in paper guarantees without acquiring the power to safeguard their independence by their own exertions. They feel themselves living under the shadow of a whole series of impending or possible conflicts, their part in which may be the part of Manchuria in the struggle between Russia and Japan. Both Holland and Belgium are fearful, and justly so, that a war between France and Germany would lead at once to a violation of their neutrality, and might even convert them into the battle-grounds of the struggle. Denmark is equally obsessed by the dread of becoming the cockpit of the "inevitable" Anglo-German clash; and there is not one of the northern states whose independence would not be jeopardized or permanently destroyed by a collision between any two of its powerful neighbors. Their anxieties, therefore, are many. Some of them, perhaps, may be alleviated by the negotiations that for the past few months have been in progress between Russia, Germany and Sweden in regard to the status quo in the Baltic, and by the further negotiations that, it is hoped, will lead to a declaration affirming the status quo in the North Sea. But it is from Germany, and from Germany alone, that their most harassing apprehensions proceed. They perceive an untiring propaganda at work directed against their economic or political independence; and they place little reliance in the trumpery constitutional obstacles which Baron von Sternburg appears to regard as well-nigh insuperable.

ANGLO-AMERICAN.